



D E T E C T I V E S C O R N E R

HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS

As the holiday season approaches, we should all take time to consider the safety of our family members and ourselves as we hit the streets for shopping, browsing or enjoying other holiday activities. There are certain criminal activities that pick up during the holidays year after year.

For example, car burglaries increase dramatically in the parking lots of shopping centers and malls. When criminals see a bunch of packages in your back seats and floors they won't know what they're breaking in to steal, but one thing for certain, it's new- never used or worn.

These days' criminals aren't just after cash or your jewelry when they confront you at your car or elsewhere. Credit card theft and illegal usage is on the rise. Even if you see them drive off with your purse or wallet, they know there is going to be a lag time between when you finish making a police report and your call to the credit card companies and your bank to cancel those stolen cards. Even so, your first call needs to be to law enforcement. You can make the other calls later, or while waiting for the officer to arrive on the scene.

SHOP WITH A FRIEND

There's "Safety in numbers". We heard it from our parents when we were growing up and it is as true today as it was then. Whenever possible, shop with a family member or friend. Shop during the day, whenever possible, and place as many packages as you possibly can in the trunk. If you drive a van or an SUV, there is no trunk so cover up all of your shopping bags. Even if a thief sees a bulky looking object under a blanket, they don't know if it's something ready for the Goodwill box or a new flat screen TV.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Avoid wearing expensive jewelry or better yet, avoid wearing any **VISIBLE** jewelry. A thief generally has no idea what your wearing might cost. The more flashy and desirable it looks the more likely you are to be targeted.
- Carry only the minimum amount of cash that you anticipate needing at a particular stop. Bring with you only those credit cards that you will need leaving the rest at home or in the trunk of your car.

- If you carry a purse or wallet, avoid opening it where others can look over your shoulder at a large amount of cash or large number of credit cards. Potential victims are sometimes selected as they stand in line to pay for their purchases, and then followed until the criminal finds the opportunity to strike.
- If you are confronted, surrender your belongings as told. This is no time to fight back- live to see another holiday season. Many times you are going to be confronted by one or two criminals with another in a nearby car waiting to drive them from the scene, but who would come to the aid of their cohorts should you start to get the upper hand.
- Don't overload yourself with packages. Make several trips, if needed, to your vehicle. In addition to lightening your load as you walk around a huge mall, you are less likely to drop a package or lay one down on a shelf or display while you are looking at something else of interest.
- Give a back-up car key to the friend or family member that you're shopping with. Vehicle lock-out businesses do a thriving business during the holiday season due to people being in a hurry and locking their keys in their cars or even laying their keys down somewhere and not being able to find them.

SAFETY AT HOME

Remember to keep safe at home also. Inspect your holiday lights for frayed wires. Make sure all decorations requiring electricity are labeled with the Underwriters Laboratory seal of approval. Some foreign made decorations can be purchased very cheaply, but are not inspected and cannot be relied upon as being safe.



Keep your wrapped presents hidden from open windows. Avoid the temptation that someone who might walk by could have to break in when they see a bunch of presents under the tree.

Stay safe and have a great holiday season and a prosperous New Year.

Sincerely,

Det. Marvin Jenne

DET. MARVIN JENNE, ID #400
ATLANTIS POLICE DEPARTMENT